

Make the Road CT
Julio López Varona
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March 30th, 2015

**Re: Testimony in favor of H.B. 7039 AN ACT CONCERNING CIVIL IMMIGRATION
DETAINEES,**

Dear Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and members of the Judicial Committee,

My name is Julio López Varona and I am the Lead Organizer of Make the Road Connecticut. With more than 16,000 members, Make the Road has fought to ensure respect and dignity for immigrant, poor, and working class New Yorkers. Now in Connecticut, our goal is to build the power of Latino and working class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services.

Make the Road would like to support H.B. 7039 AN ACT CONCERNING CIVIL IMMIGRATION DETAINEES as a necessary expansion of the Connecticut TRUST Act.

In 2013, this legislature made clear that the best way to create strong relationships between the police and the immigrant community was by promoting cooperation and trust between these two groups. The Trust Act creates these conditions by protecting individuals from being targeted based on how they look. Moreover, by preventing local authorities from targeting individuals and sharing this information, it also protects our local law enforcement organizations from liability and use of public resources for unconstitutional detentions.

The result of this law is clear, if individuals feel that they can go to the local authorities without feeling like they will be judged by how they look or questioned about their status, they will be more inclined to cooperate and work together. Unfortunately, the TRUST act has major loopholes that need to be addressed. The law does not protect the confidentiality of immigration status or other private information for anyone who interacts with the police. It also mandates notification to ICE regarding the detention or release of individuals with detainers. Finally, the law lacks key procedural protections for those who are held on ICE detainers, including access to counsel and the right to legal recourse.

Because of these reasons, many immigrants still feel discouraged from contacting the police and issues like workplace abuse and crimes in our communities continue to be unreported. As a result, we strongly support H.B. 7039. This bill will continue to improve the relationship between the immigrant community and local authorities by addressing all these issues and creating consistent policies amongst all state and local agencies.

Thank you for your attention,

Julio López Varona

